Wellbeing activities and conversation starters for parents of primary school-aged children

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There are a range of activities that will help build and maintain your child's wellbeing. Most of them are short and require very few materials.

The activities cover six key elements that are important to wellbeing. There are also activities that focus on positive thinking and gratitude as well as breathing exercises that promote calm.

These activities are based on the optional Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships teaching and learning materials.

Six key elements that are important to wellbeing

Understanding emotions

Understanding emotions helps your child to understand themselves and other people.

We can do this by focusing on recognising, expressing and managing emotions.

Understanding emotions is key to building empathy and self-awareness.

Personal strengths

Help to build your child's ability to recognise and understand positive qualities in themselves and others.

This will help to build your child's self-confidence and the capacity to face and manage challenges.

Positive coping

Provide opportunities for your child to discuss and learn different types of coping strategies.

This will increase your child's ability to manage stress, control impulses and overcome obstacles.

Problem solving

Your child can develop their critical and creative thinking skills to explore different types of problems.

This can build your child's ability to make responsible decisions that consider the likely consequences of different ways of solving problems.

Stress management

Learn about different calming strategies to deal with stress.

This can help your child to cope with challenges they are facing now and in the future.

Help seeking

In these challenging times, it is important to normalise asking for help.

Your child will learn to recognise situations in which to seek help, identify trusted people in their lives to ask for help and practice asking for and providing help.

For students in Foundation level

Understanding emotions

Goal: Understanding our emotions.

Activity: With your child, name the different emotions that characters in your favourite TV show or story book are feeling. How many can you name? Ask: *How can we work out what emotions other people are feeling?*

Personal strengths

Goal: Recognise our strengths by talking about things we are good at.

Activity: With your child, take turns at drawing a portrait of each other. Around the portrait write all the things you think each other is good at.

Positive coping

Goal: Identify positive ways to cope with negative emotions.

Activity: Come up with five things we can do to feel better when we are sad.

Problem solving

Goal: Recognise solutions to problems.

Activity: Come up with three positive and different ways to solve this problem: *You and your family arguing over which show to watch on TV.*

Stress management

Goal: Identify activities that can help to reduce our stress levels.

Activity: Ask your child to interview different family members and then draw a picture of them. Your child can ask: *What do they like to do to help them calm down or cheer up?*

Help seeking

Goal: Identify people who we can go to for help.

Activity: Make a "hand" or "star" to show five people your child can seek help from. Use it as your family plan by writing it up and placing it somewhere it is visible to everyone.

For students in Years 1 and 2

Understanding emotions

Goal: Understand our emotions.

Activity: Play emotional charades with members of your family. Each person acts out an emotion and family members guess the emotion/feeling.

Goal: Understand situations that can trigger different emotions.

Activity: Your child asks a family member how they would feel if:

- They were starting a new school or job
- Their friend had told everyone a secret they shared with them
- They had won a prize.

Personal strengths

Goal: Describe how we use our strengths to be a good family member.

Activity: With your child, discuss what each of your character strengths are. Draw a picture of yourselves using one of these strengths at home.

Goal: Describe how we use our strengths in daily life.

Activity: With your child, watch a TV show or read a story book together and identify how a character showed any of these strengths (honesty, fairness, patience). What would the opposite of these look like?

Positive coping

Goal: Discuss ways we can cheer up and calm down.

Activity: Discuss with your child:

- When I feel lonely, I can...
- When I feel angry, I calm myself down by...
- When I feel sad, I can...
- When I feel bored, I can...

Goal: Talk about fears and how to cope with fear.

Activity: Talk about:

- Things that make me afraid are...
- When I feel afraid, what are some things we do to help us manage our fears.

For students in Years 1 and 2 continued

Problem solving

Goal: Build collaboration and teamwork at home.

Activity: Using items that are safe and stackable (e.g. paper cups, playing cards), make a tower as tall as you can. Once your tower is complete, remove one item at a time, trying not to make the tower collapse. Or, if you have Jenga, play it together!

Goal: Work together to solve problems.

Activity: Talk about this scenario with your child: I had a disagreement with my best friend and felt left out. What are three positive ways one could solve this situation?

Stress management

Goal: Recognise how stress can feel in the body.

Activity: With your child, tell each other about a situation when you felt stressed. How did the body respond to this this stress (e.g. sweaty palms; butterflies in your tummy).

Goal: Discuss coping strategies for stress.

Activity: Write a list of actions with your child that you can take to deal with stress, fear or anger. Name this list: *Our Family's Calming Strategies*. Display this list somewhere at home.

Help seeking

Goal: Work with and support each other.

Activity: Encourage your child to help a family member with a something around the house, such as clearing the dishes after dinner.

Goal: Identify people we can go to for help.

Activity: Make a "hand" or "star" showing five people your child can seek help from. Use it as your family plan by writing it up and placing it somewhere visible to everyone.

Additional activities

Goal: Practice gratitude.

Activity: You'll need a set of pick-up sticks for this activity. On a piece of paper write down the following and assign each one a colour from the pick-up sticks:

- Name a person you are thankful for
- Name a place you are thankful for
- Name a food you are thankful for
- Name a thing you are thankful for
- Name a thing of your choice

For each stick they pick up, they need to match the colour to the category and name the person, food, place or thing they are grateful for.

Goal: Practice gratitude

Activity: Encourage your child to collect, find or make pictures of all the people, events and things in their life that make them feel grateful. Print them, cut them out of magazines, draw them, pull out old family photographs.

Once you have the images, stick them to a piece of poster paper and hang in your child's bedroom. Your child can decorate the poster.

Goal: Calm the mind.

Activity: With your child, sit in a comfortable position. Ask your child to close their eyes, breathe deeply and relax.

Ask your child to breathe in through their nose for four seconds, hold their breath for seven seconds and breath out through their mouth for eight seconds.

Repeat this cycle four times.

For students in Years 3 and 4

Understanding emotions

Goal: Develop language to identify and describe emotions.

Activity: Name and describe the emotions of a character in your favourite TV show. Take turns in doing this with your child.

Goal: Name positive and negative emotions.

Activity: Name three positive and three negative emotions you experienced today. Ask your child to name three positive and three negative emotions they experienced. Ask: *How did it look, sound and feel?*

Personal strengths

Goal: Recognise our personal strengths.

Activity: Personal strengths are our positive qualities. Ask your child: What are your personal strengths? What do you think are my personal strengths? Swap!

Goal: Identify how you can use personal strengths in daily life.

Activity: Kindness is a personal strength. Being kind means you do things for others without expecting anything in return. Encourage your child to do something helpful for a family member. Ask them to share their acts of kindness with your family.

Positive coping

Goal: Try a self-calming technique to calm down when we feel hurt or angry.

Activity: Try the Robot to Rag doll technique with a family member. Scrunch up tight and hard like a robot, then slowly let go to turn yourself into a floppy rag doll.

Goal: Reflect on the impact our actions can have on others and learn how to make a meaningful apology.

Activity: Talk to a family member and ask them: What is an apology? What does it feel like when someone apologises to you? What are the ingredients of a good apology?

For students in Years 3 and 4 continued

Problem solving

Goal: Identify and evaluate strategies to solve problems.

Activity: Encourage your child to talk to a family member and ask: *Tell me about a small problem you faced? How did you solve the problem? If you were faced with the problem again would you solve it differently?*

Goal: Differentiate between levels of problems.

Activity: With your child decide how big the following problems are. Rank them from 1 (little problem) to 3 (big problem):

- You miss your friends at school.
- You are feeling bored being at home all the time.

Stress management

Goal: Identify a range of strategies that can be used to deal with strong emotions.

Activity: With your child, come up with a list of positive strategies your family can use to relax or calm down.

Goal: Put a stress management strategy to practice.

Activity: Do something active with your child. Turn off screens, get out and play in the backyard, listen to music, draw together or have a dance! Get some ideas from https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/funathome

Help seeking

Goal: Identify people who we can go to for help.

Activity: Make a "hand" or "star" showing five people your child can seek help from. Use it as your family plan by writing it up and placing it somewhere visible to everyone.

Goal: Practice our help-seeking and giving skills.

Activity: Discuss with your child. Imagine a friend comes to you for advice. They tell you somebody has been mean today online. What advice would you give to your friend and why?

Additional activities

Goal: Practice positive thinking.

Activity: Each day for the next week, spend 10-15 minutes with your child getting them to think about three things that went well during the day. Get them to write down the three things and then write down what they did that made them happen.

These can be simple things like someone laughed a joke or more major events.

This can become a weekly journal for your child.

Goal: Practice gratitude.

Activity: With your child, create a family gratitude tree or wall.

Collect colourful pieces of paper, ribbons and string.

Cut the paper into postcard-size pieces. On each piece of paper, write down something to be grateful about. Tie them to the tree in your yard, a sturdy house plant or stick them up on a wall in the family room/kitchen.

Goal: Calm the mind.

Activity: With your child, sit in a comfortable position. Ask your child to close their eyes, breathe deeply and relax.

Ask your child to breathe in through their nose for four seconds, hold their breath for seven seconds and breath out through their mouth for eight seconds.

Repeat this cycle four times.

For students in Years 5 and 6

Understanding emotions

Goal: Understand our emotions.

Activity: Go around the dinner table and have each person share three emotions that they felt that day and why.

Goal: Understand others' emotions.

Activity: Encourage your child to tell a person in your family about their day. The listener tries to guess what emotions your child would have felt during their day.

Personal strengths

Goal: Demonstrate character strengths.

Activity: Encourage your child do something to make life easier for someone else at home.

Goal: Demonstrate character strengths.

Activity: With your child, plan to do something kind for a neighbour, friend or family member.

HINT: You might like to:

- Check to see if an elderly neighbour needs help with grocery shopping.
- Call a family member you don't live with such as an uncle, aunt or grandparents to say hello.
- Write a letter or send an email to a friend and post it to them.

Positive coping

Goal: Think positively.

Activity: Encourage your child to leave a positive note for someone at home to find.

Goal: Practice positive coping strategies.

Activity: Choose an activity to do with your child.

- Draw a picture together
- Listen to soothing music
- Give each other a hug
- Do a favourite hobby

Get some other ideas from https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/funathome

Reflect on how it made you feel to do this together.

For students in Years 5 and 6 continued

Problem solving

Goal: Solve personal problems.

Activity: Discuss this scenario with your child: *Your very important homework task is due today but the internet is down. How would you solve this problem?*

Goal: Solve common problems.

Activity: Discuss a repeated problem in your family and make a list of ways to deal with this problem.

Stress management

Goal: Identify ways to cope with stress.

Activity: With your child, share a time you felt stressed and explain how you managed this. Then swap!

Goal: Practice ways to cope positively with stress.

Activity: Create a stress-free space or a space within your home that your family can use to wind down.

Help seeking

Goal: Identify ways we can help others.

Activity: With your child, draw a star and on each tip name five people they have helped or provided support to this week, and how.

Goal: Identify people we can go to for help.

Activity: Make a "hand" or "star" showing five people your child can seek help from. Use it as your family plan by writing it up and placing it somewhere visible to everyone.

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Goal: Calm the mind and body.

Activity: With your child, sit in a comfortable position.

Ask your child to close their eyes, breathe deeply and relax.

Ask your child to breathe out completely, then block their right nostril with their right thumb and breath in deeply through the left nostril, then breathe out deeply through the left nostril.

Repeat for one to three minutes.

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